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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTIAGO 000415

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SUBJECT: BACHELET TO FORM NEW MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY

REF: SANTIAGO 00253

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: President-elect Michelle Bachelet intends to establish a Ministry of Public Security, with a still to be defined mandate over funds and administration of all domestic security forces. The main goal is to improve coordination between the Carabineros (national police) and PICH (investigative police), as well as make good on Bachelet's campaign promise to improve community-based crime prevention. Creation of the ministry has been in the works for over a year and enjoys wide support from both the opposition and governing coalitions. Bachelet can expect some in-house opposition from the Carabineros and the Ministries of Interior, Defense, and Health, which will fight to protect their traditional domains. End Summary.

New Ministry

**¶2.** (U) President-elect Michelle Bachelet had announced her intention to establish a Ministry of Public Security during the first 100 days of her administration. However, in recent statements, Bachelet spokesman Ricardo Lagos Weber (son of the current president) warned that the project to establish the new ministry could take longer than expected. The idea is not new: the Lagos administration has been working on the proposal for more than a year. If established, the ministry's primary purpose would be to increase coordination among the state agencies currently charged with providing security and preventing crime: the national police (Carabineros) and the investigative police (PICH). The ministry is expected to receive additional funds, as well as centralized control of money that is currently allotted to education and rehabilitation through groups like Safe Communities, Chiled deportes (ChileSports), the Ministry of Health, and CONACE (Chilean equivalent of the Office of Narcotics and Drug Control Policy).

Law and Order - The Need for a Clear Hierarchy

**¶3.** (SBU) Before the election, both Bachelet and her opponent, Sebastian Pinera, supported the creation of a new ministry. Crime levels, long-standing public support, a desire to negate perceptions that she might be soft on crime, and research by the well-respected NGO Fundacion Paz Ciudadana (Citizen Peace Foundation) all drove her to advocate its creation. During the campaign, Bachelet identified combating rising crime rates and increasing public security as two of her top priorities. Her platform described delinquency as an "attack on the most essential personal rights (life, property, and privacy)," and acknowledged the long-standing lack of coordination between the PICH and Carabineros. By putting both organizations under a single coherent leadership, Bachelet hopes that coordination can be improved, bureaucracy reduced, and more attention brought to drug-control. Although narcotics trafficking and use was not a major issue during the campaign, drug-related crime has been on the rise and some Chilean legislators have been dissatisfied with Carabinero attempts to confront it. The creation of a new ministry would also address Bachelet's broader goal of using community support and crime prevention to reduce juvenile crime in Chile, using initiatives to identify at-risk youth, improve stay-in-school programs, and increasing gun control.

Setup and Timing

**¶4.** (U) President-elect Bachelet had stated she intended to introduce legislation creating the Ministry during the first 100 days of her administration, although as noted above, this timetable may be slipping. It is rumored that she will name a future-Minister before her inauguration, possibly before the end of February. The nominee would be responsible for gathering the congressional consensus, formulating a formal proposal, and generally coordinating the creation of the ministry.

Composition

**¶5.** (SBU) The proposed ministry composition and structure is still not certain. Carabineros and PICH will form the base,

and it is possible that ANI (Chilean National Intelligence Agency) and Customs will be pulled in as well. Management of funds currently allocated for crime prevention under CONACE, Safe Communities, Chiledeportes (Chilesports), and the Ministry of Health, will also be placed under the new Ministry.

Support and Opposition

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¶6. (C) In theory, a new public security ministry is supported by legislators across the political spectrum. During a meeting with DEA/Santiago, Concertacion and opposition congressmen acknowledged the need for increased coordination among law enforcement agencies. Most opposition will likely come from ministries and other organizations that will be affected by the change, and not from the political opposition. The Carabineros, who are known for resisting change, and currently enjoy a close connection to the military through the MOD, are expected to fight hardest to keep the status quo. The ministries of Interior, Health, and Defense, which would lose funding, may also complain. The PICB, on the other hand, could welcome the shift because they dislike the Carabinero-military connection and are unhappy with the political oversight of their job by the Ministry of Interior.

Comment

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¶7. (C) Despite Bachelet's campaign promise, and the evident logic of increased agency coordination, it is uncertain whether this project will bear fruit, in what form, or how long it will take. Fitting the pieces together is complicated, and the existing bureaucracies are powerful.  
KELLY